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Ministerial declaration and message from the United Nations Forum on Forests to the World Summit on Sustainable Development

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the Commission on Sustainable Development acting as the preparatory committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development the ministerial declaration and message from the United Nations Forum on Forests to the Summit (see annex).

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Annex

Ministerial declaration and message from the United Nations Forum on Forests to the World Summit on Sustainable Development*

1. We, the Ministers responsible for forests in our countries, reaffirm our commitment to the Forest Principles and Agenda 21, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Since then, significant progress has been made. Deliberations within the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests (IPF) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF), as well as the United Nations Forum on Forests, have enriched our common understanding of forest issues and their complexity. We recognize the significant contribution made by the regional processes and encourage their continued strengthening. We also recognize that much remains to be done.

2. We commit ourselves to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. While recognizing that countries have the primary responsibility to implement the IPF/IFF proposals for action, we underline the importance for the international community to strengthen cooperation in the areas of finance, trade, transfer of environmentally sound technology and capacity-building, which are essential to ensure sustainable forest management in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. We stress the importance of national forest programmes or similar approaches, the role of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, and voluntary certification systems.

3. We underscore that forests and trees outside forests cover nearly one third of the earth's land surface, and that the economic, social and environmental well-being of the planet and humanity is closely linked with sustainable forest management. We are concerned about the continuing high rate of worldwide deforestation, as well as forest and land degradation, and commit ourselves to work to reverse these trends.

4. We reaffirm that States have the sovereign and inalienable right to utilize, manage and develop their forests in accordance with their development needs and level of socio-economic development and on the basis of national policies consistent with sustainable development and legislation, including the conversion of such areas for other uses within the overall socio-economic development plan and based on rational land-use policies, and consistent with the other Forest Principles.

5. Sustainable forest management of both natural and planted forests is essential to achieving sustainable development. Forests affect and are affected by other sectors. Therefore, policies and approaches in all sectors should be developed with consideration of their cross-sectoral impacts.

6. The management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests involves reconciling diverse and sometimes conflicting interests and is the concern of Governments, public and private owners, managers and other stakeholders. We stress the importance of multi-stakeholder participation in activities aimed towards sustainable forest management. Numerous opportunities

* Unanimously adopted by the Forum at its second session, on 15 March 2002; previously issued as E/CN.18/2002/L.2.

exist and should be taken for public/private partnerships to foster synergies as policies and programmes are developed and implemented.

7. One of the challenges to achieve sustainable forest management is to make it self-financing in the long run and to recognize the value of the multiple functions, goods and services provided by forests. We affirm the importance of trade, as well as trade capacity-building, to sustainable forest management. National and international public and private sources of finance have complementary roles in achieving this goal. Official development assistance (ODA), at the levels already agreed, will be required if developing countries are to achieve the internationally agreed development goals and objectives and other agreed sustainable development objectives, in particular to foster sustainable forest management.

8. The linkages between forests, poverty, patterns of production and consumption and international cooperation, as well as governance at all levels, are crucial to addressing the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation. We underscore the role that sustainable forest management plays in all countries to eradicate poverty and to achieve sustainable development, including rural development and sustainable livelihoods.

9. We underline the unique character of the international arrangement on forests, established to facilitate and coordinate the implementation of sustainable forest management at the national, regional and global levels through a holistic and comprehensive approach. We commit ourselves to strengthen the Forum's leading role and to make the Forum a success. We endorse its plan of action, welcome its multi-year programme of work and support the Collaborative Partnership on Forests. We stress the need for cross-sectoral cooperation among Partnership members, regional processes and Governments at the national and international levels.

10. We further stress the need for the Forum to promote synergies with related UNCED conventions, exchange country experiences and lessons learned and to engage in a dialogue with Partnership member organizations as well as other stakeholders.

11. We call upon the Partnership to support the work of the Forum and to contribute actively to the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action, including through their technical and financial resources. We note the Partnership framework to support the work of the Forum, and we invite Partnership member countries to ensure that those priority areas are addressed by their governing bodies.

12. The work of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other relevant conventions complements and supports the Forum plan of action. We invite the parties to those Conventions to support, as appropriate, the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action in the context of the implementation of national action programmes and strategies, and encourage effective cooperation and coordination among the Conventions and the Forum as well as between their secretariats and the Forum secretariat.

13. We underscore that forests are a major and rich reservoir of biological diversity and encourage effective cooperation between the Convention on Biological Diversity and Forum secretariats in areas of mutual interest. We note with

appreciation the preparation of a revised action-oriented programme of work on forests and biodiversity to be considered at the sixth meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention.

14. The World Summit on Sustainable Development represents a unique opportunity to strengthen political commitment and promote international cooperation in sustainable forest management, as well as to support the implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action. We call for concrete and specific initiatives on the ground to achieve sustainable development and promote partnerships among interested Governments and stakeholders, including the private sector, indigenous and local communities and non-governmental organizations. We see such partnerships as a useful approach to explore with relevant stakeholders ways and means to identify action-oriented initiatives to strengthen the implementation of IPF/IFF proposals for action.

15. We invite the Summit to:

(a) Advance sustainable forest management as a critical means to eradicate poverty, reduce land and resource degradation, improve food security as well as access to safe drinking water and affordable energy, and highlight the multiple benefits of both natural and planted forests and trees to the well-being of the planet and humanity;

(b) Enhance political commitment to achieve sustainable forest management by endorsing it as a priority on the international political agenda, taking full account of the linkages between the forest sector and other sectors through integrated approaches;

(c) Urge developed countries that have not done so to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) as ODA to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNP of developed countries to least developed countries, as reconfirmed at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to encourage developing countries to build on progress achieved in ensuring that ODA is used effectively to help achieve development goals and targets, to acknowledge the efforts of all donors, to commend donors whose ODA contributions exceed, reach or are increasing towards the target, and to underline the importance of undertaking to examine the means and time frames for achieving the targets and goals;

(d) Call for immediate action on domestic forest law enforcement and illegal international trade in forest products, including in forest biological resources, with the support of the international community, to provide human and institutional capacity-building related to the enforcement of national legislation in those areas;

(e) Call for immediate action at national and international levels to promote and facilitate the means to achieving sustainable timber harvesting, and thereby address unsustainable timber harvesting;

(f) Call especially for initiatives to address the needs of those parts of the world that currently suffer from poverty and the highest rates of deforestation and where international cooperation would be welcome by affected Governments;

(g) Create and strengthen partnerships and international cooperation to facilitate the provision of increased financial resources, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, trade, capacity-building, forest law enforcement and governance

at all levels, and integrated land and resource management to implement sustainable forest management, including the IPF/IFF proposals for action;

(h) Strengthen international cooperation on finance, transfer of environmentally sound technology, trade and capacity-building to ensure sustainable forest management;

(i) Call on countries and the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to accelerate implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action and intensify efforts on reporting to the Forum to contribute to an assessment of progress in 2005.

16. We, the Ministers, pledge our continued commitment to the international arrangement on forests and involvement in the Forum, and agree to meet again at the fifth session of the Forum, in 2005, to review the effectiveness of this international arrangement against the criteria to be agreed upon.